

Title: **"All Things to All People": Contextualizing the Gospel to Reach Jew and Gentile**  
Text: **Acts 16:1-5**

Find the sermon manuscript to follow along with online at [mercyhillchurch.org](http://mercyhillchurch.org).



## Big Idea

If we're going to be effective witnesses for Jesus in this world we must be skilled in contextualizing the gospel. But what is contextualization and how do we do it? Let's learn together!

Contextualization, as I might define it, is the Christian's effort to bring the gospel meaningfully to all sorts of people, from all sorts of cultural backgrounds, in all sorts of different contexts, in a way that makes sense to them, that resonates with them, that scratches where they itch, and so forth. It brings the unchanging gospel to an ever-changing world in a form and fashion which they can readily understand. It brings God's good news into man's unique context. It holds unapologetically to the essential core of the Christian faith and yet remains flexible and charitable in the non-essential externals. It's a leaning in towards others so we can lead them out towards Christ.

### 1. In Our Text

*"As an uncircumcised son of a mixed marriage, Timothy would have been regarded by Jews in the region as '... an apostate Jew.' ... Paul was bound to circumcise Timothy if he wanted to have him as a colleague, otherwise 'he would have ... [seemed to be a supporter of] apostasy and would no longer have been allowed to appear in any synagogue.' ... [I]t was [therefore] 'both proper and expedient for Paul to circumcise him. As Paul saw it, being a good Christian did not mean being a bad Jew. Rather, it meant being a fulfilled Jew. Paul had no desire to flout Jewish scruples in his endeavour to bring both Jews and Gentiles to salvation in Christ.'" - PNTC*

Interestingly enough, what first seemed like an irreconcilable tension in this text is shown at the end to truly be something held in beautiful balance. You see, what comes out here is this: even while these early Christians (Paul, Silas, Timothy) are moving out to bring the gospel to

the Gentiles, they are at the same time still ordering much of their actions with a view to reaching the Jews as well.

### 2. In Our Lives

#### Expression #1: We Give Up Our Liberties to Reach Others in Their "Rigidities"

*"To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law" (1 Cor. 9:20).*

#### Expression #2: We Give Up Our Rigidities to Reach Others in Their "Liberties"

*"To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law" (1 Cor. 9:21).*

*"Proper contextualization means causing the right scandal—the one the gospel poses to all sinners—and removing all unnecessary ones." - Tim Keller*

### 3. In Our Savior

Contextualization is hard. And we'll be tempted sometimes to go too far in one direction or another. How do you accommodate others without conforming to them? How do you care for them without capitulating to them? How do you hold firmly to truth while bending and flexing in love? I think the key to all of this is we've got to keep our eyes on Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 10:3).



## Reflection Questions

- If you're a Christian, think about how you first came to believe, how you were reached with the gospel. In what ways was the gospel "contextualized" for you by those who were sharing it with you?
- Which of the two expressions identified above seems hardest for you and why?
- Think of the people in your life whom God is calling and sending you to reach. What might it look like for you to contextualize the gospel for them?

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## Our Mission & Values

*Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.*

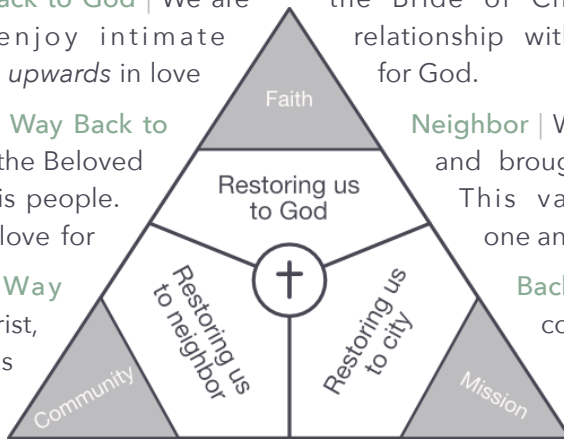
**FAITH:** The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate presses our church *upwards* in love

the Bride of Christ, created and relationship with him. This value for God.

**COMMUNITY:** The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. church *inwards* in love for

**Neighbor** | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal This value presses our one another.

**MISSION:** The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his value presses our in love for the



**Back to City** | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.

## Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



**Mail:** PO Box 23806, San Jose, CA 95153  
**Phone:** (408) 320-7080  
**Email:** [info@mercyhillchurch.org](mailto:info@mercyhillchurch.org)  
**Web:** [mercyhillchurch.org](https://mercyhillchurch.org)



Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.  
We are so glad you've joined us today!

## Announcement Spotlight

### Members' Meeting - Today!

All Mercy Hill covenant members are invited to join us for our biannual Members' Meeting after the service today from 12:30-2:00pm. We'll meet outside at the picnic tables in the pavilion around the back of Allen at Steinbeck Elementary.

If you are not currently a covenant member but are interested in becoming one, we encourage you to register for the class that is going to be launching soon (see below).

**If you have any questions, please reach out to us at [info@mercyhillchurch.org](mailto:info@mercyhillchurch.org).**

**Covenant Membership Class - Open Registration!**

**Short-Term Missions Trip to the Philippines - Last Call!**

**Scan the QR code below for more info!**

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Or find it online at [mercyhillchurch.org/communications-hub](https://mercyhillchurch.org/communications-hub).